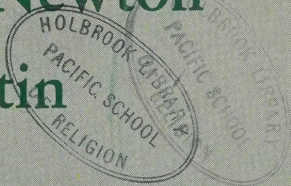


Andover Newton Bulletin



Fall Lectures Issue

In the pages of this BULLETIN we are attempting to bring together as much as possible of the Fall Lectures which were given on October 19 by Dr. Wilhelm Pauck and Dr. Edwin M. Poteat, and a very brief summary of the high points of the lectures given by Dr. Arnold J. Toynbee on October 24, 25, 26 and 27.

Professor Pauck of Union Theological Seminary in New York gave the Greene Lectures under the general theme "Roman Catholicism and Protestantism." These two lectures have been prepared from transcriptions taken at the time of the addresses and are printed in full in this issue.

Dr. Poteat, minister of the Pullen Memorial Baptist Church of Raleigh, North Carolina, gave the English Lectures on the general theme "The New Liberalism." The first lecture, "Liberalism Revisited," is included in this issue, together with an abbreviation of the second lecture entitled "Liberalism and Preaching," which has been abstracted by Dr. Wallace Forgey, Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology.

We acknowledge with gratitude the willingness of the lecturers to permit the use of these lectures in the ANDOVER NEWTON BULLETIN.

As Dr. Toynbee's lectures on the general theme "Christianity and the Non-Christian Faiths in the Contemporary World" were under the auspices of the Hewett Foundation, these will be published at a later date. However, Dr. J. Leslie Dunstan, Professor of Missions and Comparative Religion at Andover Newton has provided a very brief summary of the highlights of these four outstanding lectures.

The Fall Lectures provided a great deal of stimulating material to the more than 1,500 students, faculty, alumni, visiting ministers, and friends who were present for all or part of this impressive series of lectures.

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

John H. Scammon
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Picture Credits

Frontispiece — *Left to right:* Dean Roy M. Pearson, Dr. Wilhelm Pauck, Dr. Edwin M. Poteat, President Herbert Gezork, at the Annual Fall Convocation, October 19, 1955. Photo by Lenscraft, Inc.

Dr. Toynbee photo (Page 2) by Lyman W. Fisher, *Christian Science Monitor*.

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Andover Newton Bulletin

STEPHEN GREENE LECTURES

This lectureship was established in 1917 in memory of Stephen Greene, long-time and devoted member of the Newton Board of Trustees, by members of his family. Through this Lectureship Fund the School has been most fortunate in getting outstanding speakers "on important subjects related to Christianity in recent history."

This year's Greene Lectures were delivered by Dr. Wilhelm Pauck, D.Th., of Union Theological Seminary in New York under the two topics "Roman Catholic Questions Addressed to Protestants" and "Protestant Questions Addressed to Roman Catholics." These lectures were transcribed and edited; the text begins onPage 3.

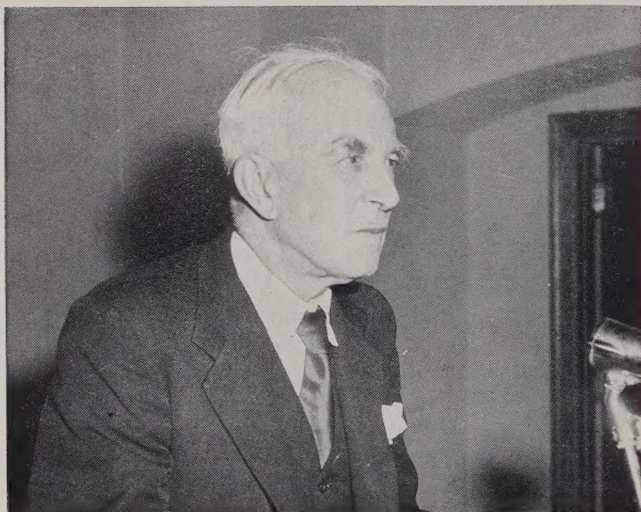
JOHN M. ENGLISH LECTURES

The John M. English Lectureship was established by the Newton Alumni in honor of Dr. John M. English, Professor of Homiletics at Newton from 1892 to 1927. This Lectureship has made it possible to bring to the School the great preachers of our day in accordance with the purpose of the Lectureship, which is "to strengthen interest in homiletics."

This year's English Lectures were delivered by Dr. Edwin M. Poteat, D.D., minister of The Pullen Memorial Baptist Church of Raleigh, North Carolina, under the two topics "Liberalism Revisited" and "Liberalism and Preaching." The first lecture, together with a brief abstract of the second lecture begins onPage 19.

Brief highlights of the Hewett Lectures presented by Dr. Toynbee appear onPage 34.

Announcement of next year's Greene and English Lectures appear onInside back cover.



Dr. Arnold J. Toynbee at Andover Newton

HEWETT LECTURES

Dr. Arnold J. Toynbee, world-famous British historian, gave the Hewett Lectures at Andover Newton on October 24, 25, 26 and 27, on the general theme, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Faiths in the Contemporary World." The subjects of the four lectures were as follows:

"Criteria for Comparisons between Religions"

"The Characteristics of the Contemporary World"

"Christianity's Relation to the Western Civilization"

"The Christian Approach to the Contemporary Non-Christian Faiths"

The method of publishing these lectures will be announced shortly. In the meantime, brief highlights are included in this issue.

THE GREENE LECTURES

By DR. WILHELM PAUCK

I. ROMAN CATHOLIC QUESTIONS ADDRESSED TO PROTESTANTS

Those of you who read the reports on some of the sermons preached in the city of New York as they are published on Mondays by the *New York Times*, may have noticed a reference to the sermon preached on a recent Sunday morning in St. Patrick's Cathedral. The *Times* reported that the preacher affirmed that only the Roman Catholic church was entitled to the name "church," "because," he said, "Roman Catholicism alone has the truth. It is assured to it by the deposit of faith, the apostolic authority of teaching as represented by the living magisterium, and the sacraments." The question with which the preacher, according to the report, closed his sermon was, "What other truth can there possibly be left to anyone else?"

The attitude reflected in these words is widely represented among the membership of the Roman Catholic church. But, unfortunately, many Protestants are also so bound up within themselves that they don't find it necessary to concern themselves with anything outside of themselves, least of all Roman Catholicism. Yet, for more than four centuries, Christendom, in western civilization at least, has been represented by the two streams of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Whether these two communions live in close proximity to each other, as is the case in some countries of the western world, or whether they lack direct contact with one another, they have found it unavoidable to relate themselves to one another. Protestant churches have always regarded the Roman Catholic church as the embodiment of a serious question addressed to them, and the Roman Catholic church has never been able to escape the close scrutiny of Protestants.

Sometimes this relationship has been determined by a profound mutual enmity. Many Catholics, following the teachings of their highest leaders, regard Protestants, whatever their specific persuasion, as heretics and schismatics. Many Protestants, on their part, look upon the Roman Catholic church as a deformation of Christian truth. And in line with the attitude of the Protestant reformers toward the Papacy, some still feel that in Roman Catholicism the devil, i.e., the very enemy of God, is at work. But, nevertheless, it has always been true, and it is especially true today, that Roman Catholics and Protestants, confronting one another and realizing that a reunion between them

could not be a ready possibility, have again and again made the effort to understand each other. Even though they could not, and cannot, hope to relate themselves to one another as members of the one body of Christ, they could, and can, expect to achieve an understanding of the way in which both, each in its own way, respond to the Gospel.

Now it is not my concern to place next to each other the questions which Roman Catholics raise with respect to Protestantism and which Protestants address inquiringly or critically to Roman Catholics. I wish to deal with the basic understandings of the Christian Gospel as they are assumed by the two communions and their members. In this respect, I find myself standing in a noble tradition. Ever since the concern for ecumenicity took hold of the Protestant mind during this last generation, efforts have been made to draw Roman Catholicism also into the ecumenical movement. In spite of the fact that the Papacy found it impossible to participate officially in any of the ecumenical enterprises, many leaders of the organization that is now the World Council of Churches, have maintained close contact with spokesmen of Roman Catholicism. And also in the Roman Catholic church, there have come to the fore many who have studied Protestantism in the endeavor sympathetically and constructively to understand the spiritual motivations that guide Protestants in their comprehension of the Gospel.

In what I shall have to say, I shall rely to a large extent upon the works of some of these recent ecumenically-minded, irenic interpreters and critics of Protestantism. I think of a German church historian who, in the year 1939, published a two-volume work on the history of the German Reformation, Joseph Lortz. In his two volumes he shows himself in all respects acquainted with the detailed historical studies which Protestants, and historians generally, have devoted to the Protestant Reformation. He does not hesitate to acknowledge that the Protestant reformers, especially Luther, were inspired by genuine, profoundly religious concerns for the Gospel; and as a historian he deals with profound regret with the division which the Reformation effected in Christendom. I am thinking also of the Dominican, Yves Congar, who in the late thirties became prominent as the most sympathetic Roman Catholic interpreter of the ecumenical endeavor of the Protestants, expressing his concerns in a widely read volume, *Divided Christendom*. Recently he published a most interesting and unique study entitled *True and False Reformation in the Church*, in which he analyzes, generally, the place of reformation in Christian life, and specifically the Protestant Reformation and the life of Protestantism. He is concerned to discover why

Protestants have found it necessary to separate themselves from Roman Catholicism.

Now then, how shall we begin? I propose to direct your attention to something very simple. Roman Catholic church houses are always open and everyone is invited to enter in, and many of the faithful do so at all hours of the day and even of the night. They go there, not merely to rest or to meditate, or even to pray, but in order to come in direct touch with the Divine. Every Roman Catholic Christian on entering the church house knows that as surely as the sacrament of the altar was celebrated in it, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself dwells in it. On entering the church building, he directs his attention to the high altar and the tabernacle where the Host, the very body of Christ, has been placed. Thus he brings himself, immediately, into the presence of the Lord by whose grace he lives, aware that He is the saviour of his soul. The Roman Catholic Christian goes into the church house in order to be confronted concretely, directly, tangibly with the Lord who, he is sure, is God Himself.

Indeed, in the understanding of the Roman Catholic Christian, the church building is in a very direct and specific sense the house in which God lives so that when he enters it he visits God in an intimate encounter. Because the Divine is directly, immediately, concretely, even tangibly present in the church house, everything in it is designed in such a way that His presence is brought to mind and when brought to mind, enhanced. All senses are appealed to in such a manner that no one can possibly escape the particular character of the building in which God lives. All the skills of human arts are employed in order to suggest the special character of the church: the finest tapestries, the most skilfully wrought sculpture, beautifully designed stained-glass windows, paintings of all colors, music of the most complex sort, and odors of all kinds, — all of them are used in the church. In terms of what is taking place in it, they suggest the real, unavoidable presence of the Divine.

For the Roman Catholic Christian, in other words, the Divine, as seen in the Christ in whom God is encountered, is directly identified with the church. Indeed, God and the church are identical; or, to put it in another way, the church is the direct, real continuation of the Incarnation. It is the *Corpus Christi Mysticum*, the mystical body of Christ. And all this by virtue of the sacraments, for they are the means which God Himself has chosen in order to render Himself and His life available to men. The church, by the decree of God as reflected in the Holy Scriptures which are the deposit of faith, is the

sacramental institution of salvation, and insofar as it is sacramental it is divine. It is the supernatural reaching into the sphere of the natural and miraculously-made part of this sphere of human life and existence. Therefore, where the sacraments are, there is the church. Whoever brings himself under the sway of the sacraments is thereby incorporated into the church and thus, into the life of God.

All this is, to repeat, an objective happening, objective in the sense of factualness. In its factualness it is tangible, i.e., it is within the reach of the senses, though the senses alone do not comprehend it. Therefore, he who is of the sacramental church and lives by what it gives is drawn into an objective, concrete, supernatural, miraculous sphere. The sacraments, insofar as they are celebrated according to what is believed to be a divine design, are efficacious by virtue of the fact that they are so celebrated. But in order to be efficacious they must be administered by the priests, the sacramental persons. The sacraments cannot be administered apart from the priesthood. Therefore, the church is this concrete, factually given divine institution only because it has engaged in its sacramental administration the services of sacramental persons, the priests. The church is a sacramental, priestly institution of salvation. This is its structure. It rests upon the deposit of faith, the reality of the divinely instituted sacraments, and the authority of the priesthood. It is believed to be once and for all divinely given, and as such unchangeable, exempt from all the transformations which men effect in the course of time in their historical dealings with the many legacies and heritages by which they live.

In other words, in Roman Catholicism, the church is considered as transcending all the modulations and modifications that determine human life. It is in its deepest reality something super-personal, impersonal. To be sure, men are in all respects involved in what is taking place in the church. Indeed, so goes the faith of Roman Catholic Christianity, no person is able to fulfill his destiny unless he shares in the church's life. Therefore, it is the highest function of every man to bring himself under the sway of the blessings which the church alone possesses and distributes. The more devout a person is in his dedication to the gifts with which the church provides him, the more surely he may hope to realize his ultimate destiny. But nevertheless, this personal involvement adds nothing to the nature of the church.

It is very important how a priest performs his functions and whether or not he dedicates himself with his whole being to his high task. But, nevertheless, whatever his personal qualifications, whether

he is young or old, whether he is eloquent or of halting speech, whether he is intelligent or lacks perspicacity, whether he is tall or of small stature, whether he is corpulent or emaciated, all this does not mean anything with respect to his priesthood. As long as he observes the prescribed rules and regulations in the administration of the sacraments, they are efficacious by virtue of the fact that they are performed and not by virtue of anything that the administrand attributes to them.

It is important to notice in this connection that a recent interpreter of the cultic life of the Roman church, a Benedictine, Dom Vonier, in articulating the unity that is constituted by all Roman Catholic worshipers insofar as they find themselves part of this institution of salvation and sharers of its marvelous gifts, insists that they all, be they priests or laymen, must learn to de-individualize and to de-personalize themselves. This, so we must say as Protestants, is a very characteristic injunction which, however, we can comprehend as being part and parcel of the basic understanding of the Christian faith as it moves Roman Catholics. Indeed, we observe that in the life of the church many features are de-personalized. The liturgy of the Roman church is the same all over the world. The order of the mass as it is celebrated in Boston does not differ from that which is observed in Tokyo. The speech of the church is Latin, all over the world, and the national and racial differences of the peoples of the earth as they are manifested in their languages are thus transcended. The priests are enjoined, not necessarily by an order on the part of the leaders of the church, ultimately by the Pope, but by long usage and custom, to wear the same kind of garments. The use of the same garments and vestments has the result that individual priests are de-individualized. The thinking of the church is of one kind, ever since the days of the Council of Trent, but more particularly since the end of the 19th century. Everyone who undergoes theological training in the Roman church is taught one and the same theology, namely that which is considered the "perennial theology" transcending all times, that of Thomas Aquinas. The attitude, therefore, by which a Roman Catholic understands that which is given to him in the divine revelation of the Gospel from which he derives this awareness of the structure of the church is one of humility in which each individual person sacrifices his own leanings, yearnings or hopes to that which as the divine is beyond all human differentiation.

In the light of this, one can comprehend the basic questions which Roman Catholics, concerned about the understanding of the Christian gospel at its deepest level, address to Protestants. What

they say is, in the last resort, of one kind. They assert that Protestant Christians display a strange onesidedness when they come upon the Gospel, because in the first place, they see it spiritualistically, and because, in the second place, they interpret it subjectivistically. Protestantism, as Roman Catholics see it, is a form of religious spiritualism, and a type of religious individualism and subjectivism. It is, in the judgment of Roman Catholics, a one-sided deformation of the Gospel. In the eyes of Roman Catholics, the Protestant understanding of the Gospel is spiritualistic because Protestants refuse to consider properly the foundations of the church as they are objectively given. Following the reformers who, in the judgment of Roman Catholics, were one-sided rebels who were unable to subject themselves obediently to the divinely given order of Christian salvation, Protestants fail to see that in Christianity everything depends, in the last resort, upon the structure of the church as it manifests itself in the deposit of the faith, in the apostolic authority of the priesthood, and in the sacraments, — in the so-called "tradition."

Therefore, Roman Catholics believe that, when following the example of the Reformers, the Protestants turned away from the Papacy, they thereby gave up all obedience to that which is exemplified in the objective order of the church. In the judgment of contemporary Roman Catholics the Papacy is the living magisterium, i.e., the highest teaching office or the living interpreter of the tradition. Insofar as Protestants insist that the Gospel as a message of divine salvation can be understood adequately only by the personal act of faith which each believer has to perform for himself in the secrecy of his own being, Roman Catholics interpret this as the reduction of all they see objectively given as the foundation of Christianity, to a spiritualistic, and in their opinion, unreal entity.

They find it impossible to comprehend how Protestants can say that the ultimate source and norm of everything Christian is the Bible and its message concerning Jesus Christ. For, the Roman Catholics argue, how can Protestants insofar as each one of them is expected in his own faith to come to terms with the message of salvation as it is expressed in the Bible, how can Protestant people know what the Bible says, since obviously it is unavoidable for them to disagree in their comprehension of the Bible? The Biblical word as it is understood by Protestants, so Roman Catholics judge, is then not its own interpreter. It needs an interpreter outside of itself and this interpreter has at all times been the church speaking through the successors of the apostles and ultimately those who are entitled to make authoritative definitions. Indeed, so the argument runs, the Bible *became*

the Holy Scripture in Christendom only because the church recognized it as such. Therefore the Bible cannot be the ultimate source and norm of the Christian life by itself; it must be conjoined with the church.

Coupled with this basic criticism, that Protestant Christianity represents a spiritualistic misunderstanding of the gospel inspired by the one-sidedness that avoids a proper consideration of that which is objectively given, there is offered a second, equally important criticism. The Protestant Christian life, confined as it is to individual subjects, leads to a diversifying individualism which unavoidably must have the consequence of tearing the unity of Christians asunder. In this connection it is most interesting to see how such a sympathetic student of Luther as Joseph Lortz interprets the religiousness of the Protestant reformers and of Luther in particular. Lortz, summing up what one must consider a common attitude of Roman Catholics when they encounter the religiousness of Protestants, says about Luther (and this at first astonishes Protestants), "The basic trouble with Luther was that he was no listener." What he means by this is that Luther found it necessary in all his Christian life to be aware of his own involvement in the actions of God on his behalf and upon him. And because Luther interpreted the Christian faith in terms of such a personal involvement in the life and action of God, he brought about a personalistic and consequently a subjectivistic deformation of the sheer objectivity of the Christian gospel and the orders which according to his own convictions are implied in the Gospel.

Lortz illustrates this point in a very interesting manner. He calls attention to Luther's translation of the Bible, which indeed reflects not only the peculiar linguistic genius of the reformer but also his personal comprehension of the meaning of the Gospel. The translation of the New Testament and the Bible as a whole is, so one must affirm, in a very specific sense Luther's own work. It is the product of one who, in translating, gave a message of faith in the name of his own believing. But when one examines the merit and the value of this translation, he is compelled to admit that it is an exceedingly adequate one, faithful in all respects to the objective text itself. In no way does the translation change the Bible's original meaning under the impact of a response to it. It is the product of an objective-subjective encounter, of a meeting between the text and the understanding which the translator had of it. Now it is characteristic that Lortz, judging as a Roman Catholic who observes this togetherness of an objective and subjective element in the way in which Luther translated the Bible, sees only the injection of the subjective element;

hence he judges that Luther was no listener. The whole dimension of faith which is indeed basically a personal commitment is understood by Lortz in terms of subjectivism.

Because it is the tendency in Roman Catholicism to see in Protestantism a manifestation of this subjectivism and individualism, Roman Catholics incline to make the historical movement of Protestantism, and Protestants as individual Christians, responsible for the crisis of modern civilization. They say that because the Protestant Reformers turned away from the objectively, factually given divine order, and because they found a following in their rebellion, people under the influence of Protestantism have learned more and more to develop a civilization of human autonomy and self-determination according to which every man in the last resort carries within himself the keys to the understanding of the meaning of life and the possibilities of translating this meaning into action. The consequence of this has been that all Western civilization, having gradually been turned away from its objective divinely given foundations, as properly understood in Roman Catholicism, has been transformed into a multitude of individual understandings. Thus there has come about a diversification of life; and many not sufficiently strong to rely upon their own resources find themselves now face to face with nothing, and out of this nihilism there must inevitably arise movements of tyrannical authoritarian control by which those who cannot live for and by and with themselves, are coercively related to one another.

In the light of an understanding of Christianity which sees in the Gospel a divine, supernatural, miraculous act of self-disclosure upon which human beings must come directly, immediately, and tangibly, Roman Catholics come to the conclusion that in Protestant Christianity this divine order has been dissolved by the transformation of the Christian life into spiritualism and subjectivism.

II. PROTESTANT QUESTIONS ADDRESSED TO ROMAN CATHOLICS

I begin at the same point where I started the discussion of Roman Catholicism. It is now customary for Protestants to keep their churches open, at least during the day; and people who pass by the church doors are encouraged to enter in order to rest, to meditate, and to pray. Many do avail themselves of this opportunity. But while it is of the very essence of Roman Catholic Christianity that people should go into the church houses to pray, it is not of the substance of Protestant Christianity that people should pray in the church houses because their prayers are not bound to special places and occasions, to special rites and special sacramental structures.

Also we Protestants call the houses in which we worship, "houses of God." But when we do so we simply prove thereby that we have borrowed an expression which possesses real meaning only in the Catholic context. For a Roman Catholic the church in which he worships is really the "house of God," just as truly as the tabernacle in which the Host of the sacrament is preserved is literally the "sacrament house." We hold our church houses sacred because we use them for the assembly of the congregation. For Protestant Christians the encounter with God is not confined to special circumstances or special requirements of worship.

When we think of what is most characteristic of Protestant Christians when they engage in the service of God, we do well to direct our attention to what happened, and in part still happens among the Swiss or the Dutch or the Scottish Calvinists and among the New England Congregationalists. At the occasion of the stated service of God all that mattered was, in the first place, that there was a Bible which was used by him who was the leader of worship, the preacher. The preacher, relying upon the Bible, addressed himself to a congregation seated in front of him. What took place under these circumstances, and what occurs to this day within the limits of the simplicity characteristics of these old Calvinists, basically marks the liturgical life of Protestantism, however much it may now be adorned and encumbered.

Now it is remarkable to recall, also, that when a congregation came together around the word of God, the surroundings were of utter simplicity providing them with only an absolutely necessary minimum; the pews were so designed as to give a person the opportunity to sit down and they were so arranged that those who occupied

them had to pay attention to what was taking place in the pulpit. The pulpit was nothing else but a lectern with room enough for the Bible. The windows permitted the light of the day to stream into them but they were arranged so that the people in the pews had no chance to divert their attention from the pulpit and to contemplate the adventures of some strange dog outside or to behold the glory of the seasons. The walls were whitewashed, barren of all decorations. The whole place was designed so that people would encounter only the word of God. And this encounter was very strange to the point of being unreal because one expected it to take effect through speaking and listening. The presence of God evoked through the spoken word was strangely indirect since the ear is to be regarded as the least specific of the senses. Yet, Protestants worshipping under such conditions were persuaded that they were meeting in the presence of God, but this presence induced by speaking and hearing, was strangely indirect and intangible yet nevertheless real.

There is here a tremendous contrast to the spirit of Roman Catholicism in which everything is directed toward a tangible meeting with God, because, in Protestantism, the presence of God, real though it is, is inconcrete to a remarkable extent.

From here we may go on to consider how Protestants of all kinds of persuasions and groupings, have tried to define the nature of the church. In the creeds of Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Methodists, and even of Congregationalists, you read that where the word of God is rightly preached, there is the church. The church is believed to come into existence through the word of God and its being rightly preached.

What is the word of God? It is, first of all, the Bible, the text of that book which for Protestants, is Holy Scripture. But "the word of God," though it cannot be had apart from the Bible, is not identified with the words of that book. Many Protestants, to be sure, have wished to have it so, but although they affirmed that the words of the holy book were identical with the word of God itself, they could effect this identification only by means of interpretation, and, in order to interpret what they had offered to them in the book, they had to have a key. This key is not to be had outside of the Bible but it is that which the Biblical words mean. And what is this meaning? According to common Protestant consensus it is the message concerning Jesus the Christ. So the Christship of Jesus is the meaning of the word.

But having said this, one must immediately go on to inquire what it is that one sees in Jesus Christ. Here we must state that,

from the very beginning, Protestants have permitted a diversity of thought according to the variety of their theologies and traditions of thought, but at all times and under all circumstances, they have been led back to one basic understanding. It is an understanding which articulates the uniqueness of the Christian Gospel in contradistinction from other religions and philosophies of life. For consider how, in all the religions you know, the relationship between man and God is defined. In the end, everywhere, except where the Gospel is properly understood in its uniqueness, what is affirmed is that in order to come into the presence of God, and in order to be found acceptable by

Him, a man must attain to some Godlikeness; he must attain to a certain state of holiness in order to be worthy to come under the sway of the Holy One. He must be cleaned from all his impurities. He must take special steps in order to reconcile himself to God. He must, if necessary, offer sacrifices to him in order, thus, to become acceptable in His sight. Or he must give evidence of having fulfilled the divine commandments in order to qualify for entrance into the Kingdom of God. He must fulfill certain conditions of holy works. He must offer evidence of being basically good as God Himself is good, in order to be able to enter into communion with Him.

But the Gospel which is exhibited in the figure of the Christ as He is pointed to in the pages of the New Testament and in the light of the New Testament in the entire Bible — the meaning of this Gospel is that God, who is the Holy One, is of such a character that everyone who approaches Him must acknowledge that he is in the wrong before Him, yet he finds that he is acceptable in His sight. The righteousness of God is such that while it condemns, it lifts men up. While it apparently terrifies and rejects, it actually consoles and attracts, and thus it transforms men, because the nature of God's holiness is forgiveness. Whosoever knows himself as a sinner in God's sight is overcome by the assurance that in spite of his sin he is acceptable to God because God's power for righteousness is able to transform the sinner in the very core of his being. This is the Gospel, the meaning of the Bible, the key to its understanding. This is what is known in Protestantism as the word of God, which, when it is rightly preached, will produce the church in the community of faith.

How can "right preaching" of this word produce the church? It is rightly preached when the minister, the servant of the word, renders it relevant to the inner and outer conditions of those whom he addresses. The word of God is not something that is self enclosed. It is "word" only insofar as it communicates itself. It is "the word" because it is basically a power of communication. Indeed, it is a

power of communication which is personal in all respects: it must be articulated by a person, and it must be spoken to and heard by persons. The minister is supposed to preach in such a manner that he enables the word of God to run a free unhindered course in and through the minds of men. Only that preaching is true preaching which releases the word of God to run its own course.

There is no more inadequate and, really, more basically unProtestant phrase than that which is so current among us, namely that the preacher is a "minister of religion." What could this possibly mean? But "minister of the word," this is a good and tellingly Protestant phrase. Preaching means serving the word so that it may take its course. This service demands all that a man has. All the intelligence, all the skills of eloquence, all the insights into the motivations of men, all sorts of acquaintance with human conditions and circumstances, historical and contemporary, in short all the wisdom the preacher possesses must be employed in order that the word of God may run its course, freely and unhindered in the lives of men. Hence it has always been of the essence of Protestantism that there should be a trained ministry, because the word cannot be preached except through an agile, sensitive, alert, responsive mind. Therefore preaching is a thoroughly personal act. There surely is a great difference between this and Roman Catholicism, where the substance of the faith is deemed to be super-personal.

Protestants believe that the church comes into being when preaching is *heard*. The Protestant creed-makers should have said, "Where the word of God is rightly preached, *and heard*, and where the sacraments are rightly administered and *received*, there is the church."

What does "hearing" mean? It means not only that man encounters God in the act of listening, this strangely indefinite realm of the human senses. It means also that he to whom the word is spoken must appropriate it for himself, that he must make it his own in the secrecy of his own inner being. Nothing is more impressive, in the sermons of Martin Luther, than his advice to his congregation to the effect that everyone must do his own believing just as he will have to do his own dying. In an encounter with God, and particularly in a meeting with the Christian Gospel which proclaims that in the end a man can live only by the forgiveness of God, everything depends upon the intimately personal appropriation of the divine gift. Everyone must believe for himself and cannot hope that anyone else will take his place. That is to say, when preaching is heard, the hearing occurs in the conscience of man, at the very source of his moral intelligence; and when it is understood it leads to decision;

and decision must issue in action. What thus takes place in the very secrecy of every individual person's soul, becomes, then, through decision and action, something that transcends his own life and effects all others. Although personal through and through, it has a social dimension and thus, through preaching and hearing the word of God, the church comes into being as a fellowship of believers linked to one another in a universal priesthood.

Here I may remark incidentally that nothing is more tragic in the life of modern Protestantism than that many Protestants, even theologically trained ones, have no proper understanding of this old doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers. You can read in many a book that the meaning of this teaching was and is that every man is to be his own priest because he has direct access to God. But this is not what the reformers had in mind when they formulated this doctrine in criticism of the hierarchical nature of the Roman church. No, the meaning of this doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers is that one who by his own intimate personal encounter with God and Christ through the Gospel has become a believer is now, by virtue of his faith which links him to God in a new way responsible for his fellow-men, serving them as a mediator of God. Wherever such a mutual connection of service between believers is lacking there the church is less than a fellowship of believers. Also under this aspect, everything in Protestantism is personal through and through.

This personalist view of Protestantism has certain serious implications. For that which is the very heart of the Christian religion, the word of God, is something in its own right. It is objective. It is something that no man can speak to himself; it must be spoken to him, as Karl Barth never tires of pointing out, and rightly so.

But it is not to be understood objectivistically as if it were something merely factual which is identifiable as something "out there," as an occurrence, a happening, or an event. The word of God, which to be sure, has a reality and a meaning specifically its own, must not be interpreted as an objective structure. It can not be regarded as an objective order which serves as a foundation on which the institutional structures of the church are built, as if that which matters basically and centrally in Christianity were a factualness. No — (and this is the profoundest insight of Protestants, since the time of the Reformation) — the word of God is something that is both objective and subjective. It is not a word in the full sense unless it is addressed to someone and, in being so addressed, also comprehended. The Gospel is the Gospel only if it is believed and trusted. It is no real

message of salvation, no promise of freedom, unless it is accepted. In other words, faith is part and parcel of the word. As Luther put it: God (or the word of God) and faith belong together. You cannot disentangle them from each other because the reality with which you deal is of such a nature that it commands a response.

Now, to be sure, this is something extraordinarily difficult. As Protestant history testifies, Protestants have always been exposed to a two-fold danger, namely to misunderstand the Gospel either objectivistically or subjectivistically.

They have tried to connect that which matters most in Christianity with something objective and trans-personal by confining the Gospel to the words of the Bible and practicing an objectivistic literalism in their treatment of the holy book. They have attempted to objectify the meaning of this book in creeds and doctrines to which the believer was expected to give assent without finding himself and his total being involved in this assent. As if faith in the gospel were an intellectual act! Moreover, by way of expressing this mentality, they have tended to absolutize ecclesiastical practices which originally arose under particular human historical conditions of religious commitment and made of them denominational traditions and usages concerning which they maintained an exclusivistic attitude. As if, as Charles Clayton Morrison has pointed out in his book on *The Continuing Reformation*, Protestant denominations were little authoritarian bodies of the order of Roman Catholicism and as if Wittenberg or Geneva or Edinburgh or Providence were comparable to Rome and to what Rome means in Roman Catholicism! In all this we must see an objectivistic misinterpretation of the Protestant encounter with the Gospel.

By way of a reaction to this objectivism there has often occurred a display of subjectivism. This is the second form of the Protestant misunderstanding of the Gospel. As if the Protestant Christian religion were entirely confined to the range of the individual's so-called religious experience! I had a student once who said to me as I walked with him across the quadrangles of the University of Chicago, "You know, Professor, the longer I am studying theology, the happier I am to be a Congregationalist, because as a Congregationalist I can believe what I please." And he was sure that he had reached a profound insight! He meant to be understood that what had befallen his own little soul and roused it to religious experience was identical with the will of God as it is disclosed in the figure of Christ to whom the men of the Bible point. This is an abhorrent, individualistic, really subjectivistic misunderstanding of true believing and

trusting in the Gospel. When Roman Catholics charge Protestantism with individualism, they can point to many similar evidences of subjectivism that results from a Protestant misunderstanding of the togetherness of word and faith.

However that may be, it is made abundantly plain to us that the Gospel by which Christians live is something two-dimensional, something both objective and subjective, involving God and man in relation with one another. It is therefore in no way the equivalent of what the Roman Catholics call the structure of the church which is something once for all given, irreformable and always the same.

Another implication of the basic Protestant understanding of the Gospel relates to the unavoidable variety of Christian ways of believing and of acting. No one can believe in the Gospel except with his whole person. He cannot ever extract the conscience, to which the Gospel is addressed as a threat and as a comfort, from all the other parts of his being, whatever they may be, psychic or physical. With his whole person he must be a believer, and being a whole person, he will find himself placed in particular conditions. Within this conditioning he must effect his meeting with the Gospel and then carry on the responsibility that is derived from this encounter. That is to say, the human forms which the Christian life must inevitably assume, indeed, the human forms which the church as the fellowship of believers must take on, cannot but be of great variety. To be a Christian in Andover Newton Theological School can, in fact, not mean the same thing as being or becoming a Christian in Copenhagen. Variety in the forms of the church and the forms of Christian life is unavoidable. The one and the same Gospel is grasped only within the innumerable apprehensions and appropriations as they arise out of the great multitude of human conditions. Therefore a Protestant does not need to be greatly impressed by that virtue with which the Roman Catholic Church is apparently endowed: its unity and uniformity. Uniformity is irreconcilable with the very way in which a Protestant Christian comprehends the Gospel.

Having said this we must immediately go on to another point. There is no reason why anyone should absolutize the conditions and ways in which he or the group with which he finds himself linked apprehends the Gospel. All the various forms of the church are relative as truly as they are forms that carry the Gospel. Therefore they are always subject to reformation and the old Protestant claim expressed in a remarkable formula still holds true: *Ecclesia semper reformata, ecclesia semper reformanda* (the church that has always been reformed must be reformed again and again). The church is in

continuous need of reformation with respect to all that it is and represents. Therefore all Christians wherever they are, recognizing each other as Christians, must relate themselves to one another by breaking through all their exclusivistic, absolutizing tendencies in order to compare notes with one another under the Gospel, thus bringing about a reformation.

The most thoughtful Roman Catholic spokesmen say that "in" the church there is indeed at all times a need of reformation but they also affirm that this reformation need never affect the structure of the church. It only pertains to historical conditions which in comparison with the foundation of the church are secondary and incidental. That is not how Protestants understand the situation. The church (which must be understood as a product of God's action and the acts of man) is always in need of reformation; just as no Christian, finding himself confronted by the Gospel and in it with the saving will of God, can ever say about himself that he has attained and that he is a Christian. For he is always in process of becoming a Christian. Therefore also everything relating to the Christian life is something in process of becoming Christian.

Protestants regard themselves and all their fellow Christians as *homines viatores*, "men on the way." No one can thus understand himself as a Christian unless, with respect to everything, even his relations with God, he is ever willing to undergo a change under the Gospel: to repent. Thus the basic question which those who come out of the Protestant heritage must address to Roman Catholics is this: "Is there not something wrong in the Roman Catholic understanding of the gospel and the nature of the church, if this understanding makes it inconceivable that the church should repent or that it ever should be in need of repentance?"

The Protestant conception of the Gospel implies the readiness of the individual and of the church to undergo a reformation in the light and under the power of the Gospel. But the Roman Catholic conception of the gospel is such that the church in its basic structure is regarded as "irreformable," beyond the need of reformation and repentance.

Here is the deepest difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

THE ENGLISH LECTURES

By DR. EDWIN MCNEILL POTEAT

I. LIBERALISM REVISITED

The Winter Edition of *Religion in Life* presents a perceptive essay by Dr. W. Norman Pittinger, of the General Theological Seminary of New York, which says: "The day has come, I am sure, when we need a revival of the true liberalism which has always been a part of the Christian tradition, and a renewal of that kind of modernism which we find . . . in a Thomas Aquinas. It is worth remembering that he, and those who thought with him, were condemned in the Middle Ages for following the *via moderna*; and that the men who were trying, in that time, to put Christianity in an idiom available to the best thought of the age, were denounced as *modernistici*."

This is only one of numerous quotations that might be offered here as the reason for what is to be said in the two periods allowed me. We are for the moment breathing more genial air than the suffocating apocalyptic atmosphere of the past decade, and this may be conducive to a more relaxed consideration of some aspects of our Christian witness.

It is generally conceded that the repudiation of the liberal understanding of Christianity was not unrelated to the social and political demoralization of Western culture during and following two world wars and in the face of a third. Liberalism in political, social, and religious attitudes shared the almost universal bankruptcy that left Europe prostrate and America unprepared for the new position it was obliged to assume in world affairs. The rise of two aggressive ruthless totalitarian societies that seemed to win momentary success by the repudiation of the Liberal Tradition, and the growing expansion and truculence of a third which boasts that it will dominate the world grown decadent and infirm on its diet of democratic delicacies, has inspired every sensitive spirit with anxiety if not indeed with fear or even panic. It is not surprising that the total Western witness is being reexamined.

Let us try, very sketchily, to see what appears to have happened. War, which has always compounded evil with evil, has reached such a peak of enormity that unless it is effectively emasculated it will breed the ultimate *genus homo horribilis* that will destroy civilization. That modern man has been able to reach such depths of human

depravity calls for an explanation as profound as its depth. Surely only a creature utterly corrupt could be so utterly monstrous; so befouled indeed that he has seemed unable, by his reason and will, to turn his hand and heart away from iniquity. To say he was a son of God sounds like impiety; that he was a rational creature with noble impulses is to mock decency. He seems rather to be demonic and his lately acquired technological cleverness has merely made him a more skillful scoundrel. The only hope for himself and his victims is sudden death or the explosive end of the world triggered by a God sickened by the folly and sinfulness of his once most promising creature.

Politically and socially the breaks that this general idea caused with romantic liberalism were made before theologians got around to it. What Walter Lippman describes as counterrevolution exhibiting antiliberal and undemocratic ideals was already well advanced in Russia, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Yugoslavia and the Argentine. The doctors of religion sought to explain this evil by a reassessment of a creature called Man, and they found their answer in a doctrine of man that began with a mythical fall into a state of corruption from pristine innocence, a condition which was passed on by physical inheritance and from which a limited number of the race of man was to be rescued by the grace of God operating upon them without their consent or cooperation. In other words the doctors went back to the fifth century to explain man's predicament in the twentieth.

It was to Augustine that they returned. Now what has been just said is not a digest of Augustine's thought, but it is, in brief, what he had to say about man's sinful nature and God's way of redemption. Why did the doctors of orthodoxy go back to Augustine, stopping momentarily at Wittenburg for Luther's blessing, but by-passing Erasmus, Thomas Aquinas, Abelard, St. Francis, and St. Bonaventure, all of whom lived in times of war and social and intellectual ferment and who brought to their times an orthodoxy that lacked the asperity and pessimism of the Bishop of Hippo's reflections on man, the fallen creature?

Augustine, about whose prodigious industry and intellectual fecundity too much cannot be said in appreciation, set the pattern of orthodoxy in its concept of man, that was not challenged effectively until after the Renaissance. Christopher Dawson describes the concept that was so long undisputed. "Humanity was born under a curse, enslaved by dark powers of cosmic evil and sinking ever deeper under the burden of its own guilt. Only by the way of the Cross and by the grace of the crucified Redeemer was it possible for

men to extricate themselves from the *massa damnata* of unregenerate humanity and escape from the wreckage of a doomed world." ¹

But there is strong support for certain suspicions we have about the factors, other than theological, that were compounded into his doctrine of original sin. Augustine was successively a Manichee, a Neo-platonist, and a Christian. Before he was converted to Manicheism he had a personal history of sexual impudicity that is set forth with great candor in his Confessions; indeed he never was sure that he was free from the corruption of carnality, praying, as he said he did when he was seventy-five, that God would cleanse his sleeping brain of dreams that put him in the illicit embrace that, with great will power, he was able to escape during waking hours.

Modern orthodoxy accepted this as a proper interpretation of the Biblical story of Adam and Eve even though theologians knew Augustine to have been a dubious expositor of scripture. He was a polemicist, par excellence, contending tirelessly against the heresies that plagued his era. But he brought to his warfare certain weapons that were dull and others that have long since been outlawed. His Biblicism was, at points, of the crudest sort; he brought Manichee dualism into nearly every problem he touched, and he appealed, ultimately, to the authority of the church when no other resource was at hand. "For myself," he said, "I would not believe even the Gospel, unless moved thereunto by the authority of the Catholic Church." "Augustine's theology was derived from and dedicated to the cultic piety of the Catholic Church"; and although at one time (399) he refused to appeal to civil power to deal with dissenters, later (404) he changed his mind due to the success of the Emperor in ruthlessly suppressing the Donatist schismatics.

Of course the theological problem in the middle of the first half of the present century focused largely on two matters: the nature of man and eschatology, the latter taking its coloring from the former. The goodness of God being unimpeachable, Man was the problem. Man, save the elect, is damned. Augustine is as callous about this as he is positive. "The vast majority of mankind . . . goes in misery to its foreknown and foreordained doom, terrible, endless, and just." ² The end of the world was therefore the only way out. Augustine had impeached any original goodness Man might have had by saying

¹ *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (N. Y.: Sheed and Ward, 1950), p. 34. Reprinted by permission.

² *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*: ed. by Roy W. Battenhouse (N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 360. Reprinted by permission.

essentially that sex is sin. This was pure Manicheism, but he brought it into his explanation of the Genesis myth — which he accepted as definitive historic fact — by saying that in the primordial sexual embrace, Adam and Eve sinned. All human generation since then is sinful and its issue is genetically corrupt. Man is a sinner because he is the result of a sinful act. He is to be cleansed from this taint by an act of divine grace mediated through His Son, uncorrupted by sex, Jesus Christ.

This doctrine which Augustine had mistakenly appropriated from Genesis and mistakenly attributed to St. Paul was part of his violent conflict with Pelagius and Arius, both of whom had more optimistic ideas about Man. And it was confirmed as fifth century orthodoxy by methods that reflect no credit on the venerable Bishop of Hippo. In order to vanquish Pelagius, who had enormous popular following, it was necessary to rig two councils of bishops and suborn one emperor before the ban of heresy could be laid against him. He was finally banished to Palestine though his doctrine of man has lived on vigorously. Bishop C. E. Raven says: "Dogmatism! It was an evil day on which metaphysical subtleties became tests of Christian discipleship: Ulfilas the Arian seems to have been an admirable and most devoted evangelist; and Pelagius to have been a morally better man than St. Augustine." ³

Man's nature irremediably corrupt: mankind irretrievably doomed; these two ideas reflected something of the social and political disintegration of the liberal democracies of Europe, and, with greater or less emphasis, became the bases upon which neo-orthodoxy was supported. The first supported a pessimism about man and his capacity to organize his life — individual and institutional; the second supported revived eschatologies that differed as widely as the naive expectations of a cataclysmic end of the world and highly sophisticated discussions on the nature and meaning of history.

Clearly this is an oversimplification of an immensely complex corpus of ideas. Similarly it will appear to be taking liberties with the halo that rightly belongs above the mitre of the great churchman. But if we are to see what happened to the liberalism which Pittinger says badly needs recapture, our focus must be limited to those elements that put it to flight. St. Thomas Aquinas repudiated much of St. Augustine and particularly his concept of the sinfulness of sex. It was not necessary to hurdle the centuries between the Reformation and the fall of Rome in order to find refuge in the prescribed orthodoxy of

³ *The Good News of God* (N. Y.: Harper & Brothers 1944), p. 36. Reprinted by permission.

the church. It is ironic that neo-orthodoxy, suffocated no doubt by the pessimism of the times, found its justification in one whose theology was frankly morose — despite his rhapsodic dialogues with God for which he is best known — and who lived in a time when none of the emancipating energies of true liberalism, the liberalism of the New Testament, were operative.

Besides this return to Augustine, other factors are to be observed in the general scene. Since Liberalism had applied canons of literary and historical criticism to the Bible, something of the authority the Book had held since the Reformation, was lost. To return to the fifth century for its doctrine of man meant a return to the Bible as the depository of inerrant divine truth. But neo-orthodoxy could not repudiate the solid achievements of the Biblical scholarship that had been fostered by the liberal mind. The effort was therefore made to recover the Bible and Biblical theology without discarding the trellis upon which liberal theology had been growing. This is what was new in the orthodoxy that came to prevail.

And yet this was not easy to do. Liberalism had abandoned the doctrine of original sin. Neo-orthodoxy recovered it and found it fruitful as an explanation of man's twentieth century sinfulness. Augustine, despite his intellectual life history, considered himself primarily a theologian and an interpreter of the revealed Word. In becoming a Christian he had come to distrust the Platonism which for a while had satisfied his religious quest. The Word was more trustworthy than the syllogism; the theologian than the metaphysician.

It is interesting to observe how this pattern has been repeated by neo-orthodoxy. Philosophy and theology, once companions in the warfare against error, have drawn apart. Whitehead in his *Conversations* published two years ago said that theology has been the curse of the past century. Considering the theological overtones of Whitehead's philosophy, such a stricture is acerb to the point almost of shock. Theology also has not been without its asperity. After meeting with a group of top-flight British philosophers recently an American visitor who prefers to be known as a theologian though his reputation is established as a philosopher, described the discussions of the English scholars as "bloodless." One recalls also the angry retort of Karl Barth to those who suggested that he was under obligation to justify Dogmatic Theology before philosophy: "No. Dogmatics has to justify itself only before God in Jesus Christ; concretely, before Holy Scripture within the church . . . It cannot be otherwise than that Dogmatics runs counter to every philosophy no matter what form it

may have assumed.”⁴ Indeed there are some who take the position that philosophy and theology are such different disciplines that it is inaccurate to use the phrase “the philosophy of religion” at all. Recently, after hearing Paul Tillich in a seminar on the philosophy of religion one scholar was heard to complain that Tillich was “implacably rationalistic.” So was Thomas Aquinas, we might comment.

To say that religion has no philosophy is to say it has no metaphysics. How theology is to get along thus crippled has been partially solved by neo-orthodoxy’s retreat to the protection of authority: the authority of the Church or of the Book. The Church has been God’s vessel for bearing the Gospel down through the tumultuous years during which, for the lack of such a vessel, it would have been lost. The Church is endowed with a unique *charisma*. It is, indeed and in itself, sacramental. To those who accept its authority it is both refuge and redemption, the latter ministry being necessarily a mystery that wholly escapes the metaphysician, as do also such inscrutable theological ideas as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the sacraments which are mediated to the believer through the Holy Spirit by faith in Jesus Christ.

The authority of the Book generally takes the form of what is called Biblical theology, which rests on the assumption that there is a Biblical authority. This is a cause of confusion for the reason that the Biblical scholarship that neo-orthodoxy cannot ignore has shown that there are numerous Biblical theologies, one at least for every age of the continuous time-span covered by the Bible. Ernest Scott of Union some years ago wrote an important book on the varieties of religious ideas — essentially theologies — in the New Testament alone. A similar study might profitably be made of the whole Bible. To those who have retreated to the authority of the Church the problem is less difficult than for those who, suspicious of metaphysics, seek a complete and compact revelation of the divine nature and purpose in the Holy Scriptures. The latter refugees, harrassed by metaphysical presuppositions on which they have been nurtured, have assumed an attitude described sharply by some as anti-rational. To be sure this is a mood not confined in our generation to theology. Furthermore, psychologically it is a natural concomitant of the pessimism that shrouds neo-orthodox understanding of man and history. The immense importance of Barth, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, even of Augustine and Tertullian and certain New Testament passages, supports this

⁴ Cf. L. Harold DeWolf, *The Religious Revolt Against Reason*, (N. Y.: Harper & Brothers, 1949) for a full discussion of this point.

pervasive suspicion of reason. If man is corrupt, his thinking is predestined to illogic, error, and folly. To trust his reason is as unreasonable as to concede him his impulses.

If theology is, as one dictionary has it, "the science which treats of God, His attributes and relations to the universe" or "the study of divine things and religious truth," the Bible is not, strictly speaking, a theological book. It is a story of a people, enmeshed in the tangled social, moral, political, and ritual ambiguities of their history, seeking to make a deep awareness of God that was uniquely their own, normative for all life. Theology, on the other hand, is a schematization, infinitely varied because its components are put together according to the presuppositions of the system-maker. Hence there are disparities in theology so wide that there have been groups that, in the name of God, burned dissidents who remained obdurate in their apostasy. To close the doors of the Academy against the philosophers and to allow within only those who seek safety in theology, is to doom to suffocation in the smog of pious disputations those who are thus immured. They deserve a more pleasant fate.

This is important, we think, because the new liberalism must cleanse itself of the suspicion of being unbiblical and because the current neo-orthodox answer to liberalism comes close to being a spurious and selective Biblicism. The Bible is the record of man's effort in Palestine to confront himself, the universe of things and persons and God. It is, we properly believe, incomparable in its profundity, its sensitiveness, and its merciless probing of the human and divine encounter. Out of it emerge patterns of actions, rising levels of moral and intellectual acuity, some of which are right, some wrong, but right and wrong they have been able to give shape to what is today the world's most vital culture.

A theology, however queenly its status as a "science" a century ago, is the result of speculations, deductions, and inferences set in a plausible scheme. But it tends to move away from life toward abstraction; away from the relativities of human dream and frustration toward absolutes. "We beheld his glory, full of grace and truth," says the Bible. Said the theologians at Nicea in 325: "Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, both those in heaven and those on earth." It is hardly too much to say that the Bible is in a way a protest against theology and ritualism, the first of which tends to aid man's escape from the normative — by which we mean ethics; the second of which tends to

increase his susceptibility to the anaesthesia of stereotype. The Word of God in the Bible was intelligible to a man by a burning bush though the encounter was fearsome with mystery and portent; in our times the Word of God mediated by the lush green shrub of neo-theology is unintelligible except to the initiated, and they are often more inclined to dogmatize than to remove their shoes in wonder and worship.

One other aspect of the neo-orthodox revolt against liberalism needs brief comment. It is the matter of the ethical compulsions of our Christian faith. From what has just been said the inference should be obvious that the Bible, if it is not the book of *a* theology, is the book of *an* ethic. More is to be said on this point in our second session; for the moment it need only be pointed out that the tendency to make theological correctness more imperative than ethical correctness is a natural derivative of the Augustinian doctrine of Man which, as we have said, is the base on which the structure of orthodoxy, neo — and paleo — rests. There is evidence in Augustine's *Confessions* that he was immensely reassured when he discovered that he was born under a curse. Psychologist though he was, he was unaware that the source of his satisfaction in his interpretation of the Eden myth lay in the fact that it helped expunge the sense of guilt into which his concupiscent youth had plunged him. If sex was sin and he was born of sin, his sinful inclinations were no more of his own initiative than was the ultimate grace of God that, willy-nilly, was to save him. This is not to say that he did not try to behave himself; it is to say that the problem of guilt was simplified for him as it has similarly been simplified for others.

Brought within the scope of modern Augustinianism this says that man, corrupt in his nature, exhibits his corruption by the pretentiousness and folly of his mind, by the misdirection and intransigence of his will, and by the filthy rags of his self-styled righteousness. But none of this is his fault; he was born under a curse and, unless the grace of God intercepts, he is to die under a curse.

This, of course, tends to cut the nerve of moral action and to enervate the vigor of ethical idealism. It can by no means be said or implied that the proponents of modern Augustinianism are morally indifferent or worse. Some of them are tremendously concerned and active with social movements for corporate righteousness. It is historically true, however, that the social gospel was the child of Liberalism and one wonders whether those who hold to neo-orthodoxy in one hand and the social gospel in the other are bearing unintended witness to the residuum of liberalism that still infects their wills even

as liberal Biblical scholarship still infects their minds. Indeed the problem of ethics for orthodoxy is curiously vexed.

This has taken an interesting turn: social ethics can erupt into neo-orthodoxy even while the questions of personal morality are touched very lightly. A recent review of a book titled *Doing the Truth*, advertised as one of a series "attempting to bring the fruits of the present theological revival to the notice of the layman" ⁶ has in part this to say: "The chapters on social ethics being so strong, it is disappointing to find only a single and very brief treatment of personal ethics. To be sure, the theological ethic of our times has been relatively silent on questions of personal morality; many of us have been so anxious to dissociate drinking and smoking from fundamental Christian concern that we have left behind all questions of personal discipline with a sigh of relief. The liberal theology was not so tentative, however, and at its best that tradition developed a quite distinctive character in its adherents. The theology that has risen on the back of Liberalism has not led to a distinctive Christian character; or if it has, it is not a particularly attractive one — over-sophisticated, over-critical, over-clever."

Why should it? Christian character is the result of the selective operation of unsolicited divine grace. Man's impotence is complete, his pretensions to goodness are sinful pride; his effort to assess his achievements are distorted by egotism. Is not the mistaken advice of Peter (Acts 2:40), "He testified with many other words and exhorted them saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation,'" rather to the point? Escape is an intriguing suggestion; and if escape can come about, not by individual effort, but must invite an apocalypse of total destruction, its necessity is to that extent made more convincing.

Up to this point our analysis is vulnerable to at least two criticisms: it draws the pattern of Orthodoxy in lines too black and too fine. In stressing Augustine's doctrine of original sin we have skimmed the fact of sin or seemed to treat it superficially. There are psychological depths to this doctrine that cannot be ignored, even though psychological probing may dig up some ideas unsupported by orthodox Biblicism. Secondly our analysis has not been a return visit to Liberalism as our topic promised.

What is Liberalism? A full discussion of that question could easily exhaust both our time and patience. For this reason it is necessary to simplify as we have in our reflections on Orthodoxy,

⁶ *Doing the Truth* by James A. Pike (N. Y.: Doubleday, 1955). The review quoted appeared in the *Christian Century* Sept. 7, 1955, and was written by Wm. H. Hamilton. Reprinted by permission.

even at the risk of shallowness. For our purposes we suggest there are two kinds of Liberalism which, though they both spring from a root as ancient as man's first conscious realization of freedom, bear different fruit.

Rousseau may provide us the example of one sort. When Archbishop de Beaumont condemned his book, *Emile*, because it was unorthodox, Rousseau replied: "the fundamental principle of all morality is that man is a being naturally good, loving justice and order: that there is not any original perversity in the human heart, and that the first movements of nature are always right." Froebel who made this flattering self-estimate the basis of new educational processes, simplified the job of training the young on the grounds that "the still young being, even though as yet unconsciously like a product of nature, precisely and surely wills that which is best for himself." Observe the words "precisely" and "surely."

This appears little less than silly to us, for if Rousseau and Froebel were right, education is an impertinence to nature. The necessity for moral and intellectual discipline would be eliminated by genes and chromosomes. The unhappy consequences of this self-esteem in morality, politics, social ferment, and world unrest have been too often set forth to need repetition here. And insofar as this Jacobin philosophy became identified with Liberalism elsewhere than in France, so that Man's moral, esthetic, and rational fulfillment were regarded as natural and irreversible, it was inevitable that he should sooner or later fall victim to his pride, his folly, and his sin. This he did.

Now Liberalism is the experience of freedom dressed up in its Sunday best; and freedom is God's choicest gift to His most troublesome creature. This is hardly the place to argue that the Eden myth is to be properly understood as Man's first effort to be free, an effort that always demands separation in order that it can voluntarily establish alliances within which freedom can be exercised. Such freedom is indivisible even though diffused. This is not doubletalk. It is a commonplace in our understanding of liberal democracy that freedom of religion, of thought, speech, and assembly were achieved by denying either to the authority of church or state a sovereign monopoly in religion, philosophy, morals, conscience, learning, and opinion. Man's freedom within the state was sacrosanct. It is this that totalitarianism furiously resists. The moment one aspect of man's freedom is lost, all other aspects are threatened.

It appears, therefore, that it is impossible for man to be free in one aspect of his corporate life if he is imprisoned in another. He is

not politically free who is religiously fettered. Conversely he who is religiously free cannot be politically enslaved. This is why totalitarianism must first neutralize the institutions of religion if it is to impose the restraints of tyranny on the total life of its society.

This also explains what has already been mentioned: that the retreat of theology to authoritarianism has been part of a general retreat in politics, diplomacy, and economics. Freedom has been difficult to keep vital and when in trouble it has sought protection by abdication. Erich Fromm has described this persuasively in his book *Escape from Freedom*. André Gide wrote in 1928: "I can assure you that the feeling of freedom can plunge the soul into a sort of anguish." ⁷ The new orthodoxy has explained this as a manifestation of man's congenital corruption; the new politics (Russia, e.g.) explains it as the inevitable disintegration of bourgeoisie ideals and practices due to the invariable operation of the dialectic dynamics of history. In each case security is promised to those who come, pliant and suppliant, to the protection of the dominant authority — church or state.

If we turn from Rousseau's liberalism, to whom may we go? I suggest the name of one rarely thought of in this connection: John Emerich Edward Dahlberg Acton (1834-1902). This is the Lord Acton known best by a half-true aphorism to the effect that "power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely." This, we say is a half truth because while it is altogether true that power tends to corrupt, the relation of absolute power to absolute corruption needs examination. One would think that absolute power would possess the power to protect itself from corruption. This is a metaphysical question. And if we think of God as absolute power we shall not find it easy to make room for corruption in His nature. This is a theological problem.

Lord Acton deserves distinction for more than this oft-quoted maxim. He was said to have been the most erudite man of his times; he was a historian of great distinction and authority; and he was a devout Roman Catholic. This, when we reflect upon it, may be taken as a sound basis for the true Liberalism for which Dr. Pittinger asks. His great learning and confidence in the human reason is the opposite of the anti-intellectualism of Orthodoxy; his sense of history provided the limitless perspectives within which all ideas and facts are to be seen; his allegiance to the Roman Church reflected his sense of man's

⁷ Quoted by Walter Lippmann in *Essays in The Public Philosophy* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1955), p. 110. Reprinted by permission.

need for an authority, venerable, and vested with power. "Liberals who have come to be skeptical of the virtue of a secular, placid and optimistic Liberalism have discovered in Acton a Liberalism, religious in temper, which is able to cope with the facts of human sin and corruption." ⁸

History, to Acton, was a "formidable weapon of criticism"; he held to the idea that "Christianity was essentially a history rather than a doctrinal system or philosophy (theology), that its dogmas were not fixed for all time but underwent change and development. The test of dogmas . . . was not the logical consistency of a system, but historical evidence and fact" (page 23). "Modern history is of interest not only because it broke with the past, ensuring the predominance first of opinion over established belief and then of knowledge over opinion, but because it is a narrative about ourselves with its themes still uncompleted and its problems unsolved. Religion is the most conspicuous of these themes and one of the most urgent tasks of modern historians is the redeeming of religion from many unjust reproaches and from the graver fact of reproaches that are just" (page 196). History, for Acton, had two uses: "its peculiar genius was its ability to isolate the abiding issues from the morass of the temporary and the transient." Secondly "the secret of the authority, the dignity, and the utility of history lay in the flexible integrity of the moral code."

The secular idea of history as merciless, as a slow stream into which the ashes of Babylon could fall and beside which the roses of Byzantium could flower without ruffling its imperturbable unconcern was not congenial to Acton. History was the movement of God in time, gathering everything into itself and rendering its judgments on human folly and sin impartially.

Authoritarianism is not comfortable with such an understanding of history. It is selective of its data and passes judgment in terms of its established dogmas. It must make a pretense and a display of authority to authenticate its beliefs. It will even rewrite history to conform to dogma. Acton held that the principle of authority "has been the main actor in history and is mainly responsible for its horrors" (page 207). It is easy for those of us in the Protestant tradition to read into these words a situation that could obtain only under the Roman Church. This is only partly correct; the authoritarianism of

⁸ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Lord Acton, A Study in Conscience and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. VII. Reprinted by permission.

Orthodoxy of any sort that protects itself from history can also be responsible for horrors — ideological if not indeed physical. Furthermore while Acton held the authority of Rome in respect, he was a bitter antagonist of the Dogma of Papal Infallibility which he described as "a vulgar perversion of faith" (page 95). The two men with whom he feuded much of his life were Cardinals Newman and Manning, converts from Anglicanism to Rome, and men, who despite their undisputed learning, evoked from Acton nothing but scorn for their flight from the freedom of the English universities to the authoritarianism of the Vatican. Of Newman he said: "he accepted and believed the dogma of infallibility although he was unable to reconcile it with well ascertained historical facts" (page 156).

It is, of course, hazardous to make anyone a paragon of the liberal spirit. The field for choice is immense and the varieties are as wide as the herdsman of Tekoa and Thomas Aquinas. And there are attitudes and ideas in Lord Acton that fall short of fully satisfying us. Is it not, however, of the essence of Liberalism that it be tolerant of human variants so far as they do not betray us into intellectual and spiritual seifdom? This Acton seems never to have done.

Acton, however, did exemplify three factors that are indispensable to the new Liberalism that is overdue in the Christian community. The first is a sense of the inviolability of history and its utility as a moral and intellectual guide. This, of course, carries with it trust in man's capacity to arrive at reasonable judgments. Lippmann, cited above, speaks of the "postulate that there is a rational order of things in which it is possible, by sincere inquiry and rational debate, to distinguish the true and the false, the right and the wrong, the good which leads to the realization of human ends and the evil that leads to destruction" (page 134). Second: an awareness that man must yield himself to some sort of authority. Unbridled freedom is anarchy, it not only exposes one to the hazards of his own excesses, it offers him no protection from the excesses of others. Thus Paul who could call himself a bondservant of Christ, could also boast of the liberty that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thirdly, in Lord Acton's view, authority, save that of God alone, can not claim to infallibility without committing the sin of making one's self God which is pride's optimum dimension.

It is within the frameword of such an understanding of Liberalism that we shall turn to certain aspects of the Christian witness to which we are committed, in the hope that we may prove both its expositors and exemplars.

II. THE NEW LIBERALISM AND THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS

(A DIGEST OF THE SECOND LECTURE)

Dr. Poteat began his second lecture by making it very clear that by the new Liberalism he did not mean a return to the old liberalism. He reminded his audience that "our concern here is a Christian concern; that what we are talking about is a new Liberalism in the understanding and proclaiming of the Christian testimony, and that what has made this necessary is the current popularity in theological circles of an authoritarianism — of institution or creed — that we think tends to suffocate certain aspects of the vital Christian message."

However, Dr. Poteat made it very clear that the new Liberalism is not to be divested of authority per se; rather it must not assume "Absolute authority." The new Liberalism welcomes history as a "formidable weapon of criticism" knowing full well that authoritarianism may not only stifle the truth which now is but may also bar the gates against any further truth which might seek to gain entrance. "New Liberalism, then," said Dr. Poteat, "is a reaction against the new pretensions and self-defense of neo-orthodoxy. This is a pale reflection of Rome's absolutism, to be sure, but it is not different from it in essence." At this point, Dr. Poteat illustrated his remarks by referring to the fundamentalist Baptists and latitudinarian Anglicans who "exemplify the basic distrust that each has of history and the necessity, therefore, of maintaining their group authority arbitrarily by repudiation in the first place and evasion in the second."

From here on, Dr. Poteat discussed what the new Liberalism has to say on two matters: (1) the nature of the Christian Fellowship commonly called the Church; and (2) the Closed Community of Christendom.

In addressing himself to the first of these, namely the Christian Fellowship commonly called the Church, Dr. Poteat stressed the extreme danger and tragic results which are involved when we convert a metaphor like "the body of Christ" to fact and thus reduce "a venerable idea to meaninglessness."

Just so, the acceptance of the metaphor "the body of Christ" has had two "unhappy consequences": (1) it has set up a road block in the way of true ecumenicity, and (2) it has given birth to and continues to undergird the idea of the sacramental character of the church, which in turn, because of a desire to protect the church from schism, may lead to situations in which the spirit of Christ is ignored.

Dr. Poteat now moved on to consider "The Closed Community

of Christendom." The challenge with which the new Liberalism confronts this idea is revolutionary. He stressed the universalism to be found in both the Old and New Testaments, in Jewish history and in the early days of the Christian Movement. But authoritarianism took over and left a trail of violence and excommunication. Jesus and Paul, said Dr. Poteat, "for the most part shared the optimistic universal dream of the seers of Israel." Very early, however, in the Christian Movement a narrow absolutism crept in and has continued to manifest itself today in this or that denomination which seems to feel "somehow — though it would be slow to argue it openly — that it mysteriously possesses the key to the lock of salvation that fits more snugly than any other."

Now, however, suggested Dr. Poteat, "the past few decades have revealed a universal faith that is the core of every religion. All living faiths ask the same questions and come up with strikingly similar answers. We are being compelled to believe that the Source of Truth is one even as the methods of its apprehension are varied." All denominations feel the influence of this — and, as Poteat said "Roman authority has felt the necessity of yielding to the compulsions of history at least to the point of saying that *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* does not mean what it says."

So — Dr. Poteat suggested that possibly our Lord Himself would prefer "some such words as 'the body of the Redeemed' to depict the relation between Himself and the Church. This is fact, not metaphor." It is this fact, because it has its feet planted in history, which gives the most promise of meeting the tragic aspects of recent times and providing a framework within which what is truth may be fostered and into which new truth may enter and find hospitality.

Our idioms are changing, and so there are times when the church and the world do not speak the same language but with open doors and open minds there may be intelligent communication, sympathetic understanding and dedicated commitment.

However, we must not merely have new and common idioms: "the problems our new world presents must be understood within the framework of a suitable metaphysics." This presents to the church a great challenge and places upon the new Liberalism a very pressing responsibility.

The lecture came to a close with a strongly worded conviction concerning the place of the Bible and Jesus and "the normative ethical ideals of our Judeo-Christian heritage." It was a moving moment when Dr. Poteat said, "Jesus Christ still remains the ineffable, the incomparable, the truly incarnate Son of the Father."

BRIEF HIGHLIGHTS OF DR. TOYNBEE'S LECTURES

By J. LESLIE DUNSTAN

Professor of Missions and Comparative Religion

There are a number of criteria by which the various higher religions can be compared one with another. For example, they all have an attitude toward suffering and an attitude toward evil which, although the attitudes differ as between the religions, nevertheless suggest that all of them deal with the same human problems. And it is this fact of common concerns which must be considered in any discussion of the approach Christianity may make to the non-Christian religions and any discussion of the place of the higher religions in the world today.

In the past when the higher religions were the unchallenged dominating spiritual forces of the world they were very conscious of their differences and of their rivalry. All of them in those days had the ambition of capturing the whole of the human race. But today those religions find themselves in the presence of a worship of collective human power. That worship threatens all of them alike, the ideals and precepts which they have in common and the ideals and precepts which are distinctive of each of them. This fact should make the followers of the different higher religions reconsider their traditional relationships one with another.

The higher religions are and should enter into a charitable competition. If this were to happen Christians can feel sure in advance of two things. They can feel sure that in peaceful competition the best of the competing religions will win, eventually, the whole of the human race. If we believe that it is the nature of God to love men and to lead men toward Him, then we must believe that the fullest and best life He has given will draw all men to it when the different insights of the various religions are brought into focus one with another. Secondly we can be sure that Christianity will not replace the other religions, but that it will absorb into itself the best that is in them. That is what it has done in the past and that is what it will do now. Christians need have no fear. They can face the future with confidence if they face it with charity and humility. Surely we can do nothing without conviction; but we shall fall into disaster if our conviction leads into the sin of pride.



Dr. Toynbee (center) together with (left to right) Dr. J. Leslie Dunstan, Professor of Missions and Comparative Religion, Dean Roy M. Pearson, President Herbert Gezork, and Dr. Wesner Fallaw, Professor of Religious Education.



Overflow audience at Dr. Toynbee's lectures

